There was a land, not perfect of course, but a land where imperfect people strove for perfection, committed themselves to lifestyles that were in concert with nature and not in rank opposition to it, a people who by doctrinal conviction, i.e. allegiance to Buddhist philosophical tenets and by knowledge acquired through centuries of engagement had concluded that simplicity in all things was advisable and co-existence and collective ethic superior to competition and self-seeking. It is therefore not surprising that travelers throughout history one after the other expressed the view that if Paradise existed this must be it, or at least, this Emerald Island in the Indian Ocean was the closest to the fabled Garden of Eden.

The lifestyle of the people mirrored the realities of the natural world. Diversity was considered a natural and happy condition, both in nature and in society. Harmony in all things was a lesson that the Buddha taught and one whose logical worth was evident in the natural world, its cycles and its overall ethos.

Sure there were ups and downs. Times of peace and times of strife. There were calamities, natural and otherwise. For more than two millennia though, there was very little veering from the above path, the path of sustainable practices, benevolent engagement and harmonious relations between human being and human being, human being and other creatures and human beings and other life forms.

Then came 'development', promising 'modernity', promising 'prosperity' and, strangely, promising to set up Paradise on Earth. Here. Now. In that unholy rush, time-tested processes were deliberately fractured and dismantled; the natural order of the earth and its cycles was deliberately and callously disrupted. Development cut through forest cover and biodiversity density, separated community from community, human being from nature. And it was not all 'home-grown'. 'Progress' in other parts of the world showered its toxic residue over Paradise.